

(2) that joe namath was chosen to star in  
the second movie made from a charles portis book.

so what is the point of this poem,  
or, better, what are the points of this poem?

simply that

- (1) john wayne was not a great actor.
- (2) john wayne was sometimes the perfect actor for a part.
- (3) acting is an overrated art anyway.
- (4) john wayne was not a great american.
- (5) i surely hope that it isn't necessary for a person to  
be like john wayne in order to be an exemplary  
american.
- (6) that there have been many worse americans than john  
wayne.
- (7) that there have been many worse actors than john  
wayne.
- (8) that frederick exley has written how much easier  
it was to get in touch with john wayne  
than with gloria steinem.
- (9) that i have no doubt john wayne (and probably  
frederick exley too) would have been a helluva guy  
to have a drink with.

AFTER THE FINAL

-- with an assist to M.

It was a bit disconcerting  
when I caught a couple of the students  
using torn-out pages  
of the Norton Anthology of English Literature  
as Zig-Zag papers.

MARIE

a large, plain, sagging woman --  
jolly, nonetheless, and no doubt  
much more complicated than we would have guessed --  
she lived-in with my father's parents  
the many years of their retirement.

what i remember best of her,  
besides her blousy, quilted attire,  
is that she kept a diary.  
how many years she had been keeping it,  
i cannot say, because marie was also ageless,  
but i think she must have started it  
before our family knew her.

she never missed a day.  
i doubt that she was any more interested in prose style  
than in the fashion of her attire.  
i imagine her diary was a factual record  
in the great tradition of sergeant joe friday:  
a log of births, deaths, weddings, baptisms,  
picnics, holidays, roast beeves,  
and the first fresh corn of the season.  
i'd guess her diary contained more dates  
than an arab sheikdom,  
all those external, public goings-on  
that virginia woolf would have dismissed  
as quite materially immaterial.  
she did, however, have a small room of her own,  
and, at just the right time,  
she came into an independent income,  
although it involved her in a lengthy probate battle,  
from which she did not flinch.  
yeah, the more i think of marie, i can definitely  
see her as a character in an arnold bennett novel.  
then again, i've always felt that bennett joined to woolf  
might make the complete novelist -- james joyce, perhaps.

but i digress --  
for over twenty years marie's been traveling.  
i still hear from my mother that a card's arrived from  
marie, from some country that's recently changed its name.  
i think she's circumnavigated the globe  
in more directions than magellan.

i'm sure she's still keeping her diary.  
to anyone outside our family  
i suppose it might be dull as hell.  
that doesn't matter, though:  
her diary is remembrance,  
which my colleague, gene dinielli, assures me  
is the great theme of our literature.

thus, marie remembers everything;  
and i remember marie.